

Executive Summary

In January 2003, the Bureau of Land Management-Alaska wildland fire and fuels management program was evaluated by the BLM National Office of Fire and Aviation. That review determined that the existing wildland fire and fuels management direction in BLM-Alaska land use plans was not adequate. Congress has directed that all land use plans must contain wildland fire and fuels management guidelines as described in various National Fire Plan documents by September 2004. BLM-Alaska's planning schedule did not sufficiently meet that mandate. Therefore, this Land Use Plan Amendment for Wildland Fire and Fuels Management and the associated Environmental Assessment were developed to bring the 12 existing BLM-Alaska land use plans into compliance and supply interim guidance for BLM-managed lands for which completion of new land use plans is scheduled..

The Amendment identifies land use and resource objectives and the wildland fire suppression options and fuels management activities that will achieve those objectives. Fire management options ensure the protection of human life and site-specific values and also recognize fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent of the Alaskan ecosystems. Firefighter and public safety are identified as the number one priority in all fire management activities. Existing Alaska-specific fire management decisions and policy in the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 1998 (AIWFMP) were used to develop the Amendment. As BLM-Alaska Field Office staffs develop alternative criteria for future land use plans, the Amendment decisions will be reviewed, incorporated, revised or replaced by area-specific land use and resource objectives that can be achieved by wildland fire and fuels management activities.

This Amendment addresses BLM wildland fire and fuels management guidance to:

- Protect human life and property.*
- Use wildland fire and fuel treatments to meet resource objectives.*
- Reduce the risk and cost of uncontrolled wildland fires through wildland fire use, prescribed fire, and manual and mechanical treatments.*
- Reduce the adverse effects of fire management activities.*
- Continue interagency collaboration and cooperation.*

The level of detail in the Environmental Assessment is appropriate to the first tier of BLM's land use planning process. The analysis considers the environmental consequences of BLM fire suppression, fire exclusion, and fuels management activities. Individual projects were not considered; when projects are proposed, a site-specific environmental analysis will be required.

The Amendment also reinforces BLM-Alaska's commitment to support the interagency wildland fire program, consider the latest available technology and methods, and support scientific research to study fire effects and improve business practices.

Appendices contain additional supporting information and reference material.